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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4067  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2341  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0379  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1012  
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RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7347  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1775  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/04/2018  
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [UZ](#)  
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT OF UZBEKISTAN WOULD WELCOME RETURN OF  
U.S. DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION

REF: TASHKENT 82

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (C) Summary: Senior officials from Uzbekistan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Commission for Drug Control told U.S. officials on April 2 that their respective agencies as well as the National Security Service would welcome the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's return to Uzbekistan. The officials described the narcotics situation in Afghanistan as worsening, and appeared genuinely concerned about the threat this poses to Uzbekistan's security. These concerns, the possibility of DEA assistance resuming for a GOU underfunded Sensitive Investigation Unit (SIU) and a more general desire to improve ties with the United States are probably driving Uzbekistan's renewed interest in bolstering bilateral counternarcotics cooperation. Post encourages DEA's Regional Director to visit Tashkent in May to present a specific plan to Government of Uzbekistan authorities on how to bring DEA back and intensify counternarcotics cooperation.  
End summary.

Counternarcotics Important to Bilateral Relationship  
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12. (C) DEA Dushanbe Acting Country Attache Paul Hackett, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Poloff met with senior counternarcotics officials from the Ministry of Internal

Affairs (MVD) on April 2 at MVD Headquarters. The MVD officials present included Chief of the Department for Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking and Circulation Shakirjon Inagamov; Deputy Chief of the Department of Counternarcotics and head of the Special Investigations Unit Colonel Nodir Kurbanov; and Special Investigations Unit Section Chief Shokhrukh Ulughudjaev.

13. (C) Inagamov began by bemoaning the worsening narcotics situation in Afghanistan, noting that Uzbekistan is taking additional steps to try to interdict drugs. Narcotics-related crime has been on the rise and seizures have increased, he said. Inagamov assured the U.S. side that, as Embassy staff have verified, U.S.-provided counternarcotics equipment is being maintained and used. The MVD has been contending with many problems, but is doing its best to combat drugs, he said.

14. (C) Deputy Chief of Mission mentioned recent statements from President Karimov, National Security Council Secretary Ataev, and Foreign Minister Norov regarding the importance of counternarcotics in the bilateral relationship. He noted that while DEA's office in Uzbekistan had previously been closed, given the severity of the narcotics problem, its connection to terrorism and to governance in Afghanistan, it was important to bring a DEA officer to Tashkent to discuss counternarcotics cooperation with the GOU, including the possible return of DEA to Uzbekistan.

15. (C) Visiting DEA Dushanbe Acting Country Attache noted that Uzbekistan's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) is unique in Central Asia, and DEA hopes to reestablish operations in Uzbekistan and resume conducting joint investigations with DEA's Uzbek counterparts. (Note: The SIU is part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), and was established with the assistance of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, reftel. End note.) Hackett mentioned that the DEA Regional Director is planning to visit Uzbekistan in May to discuss DEA's plans for the region. It is possible that DEA's presence in Afghanistan will grow considerably in the future, and when that happens, a greater DEA presence in Central Asia will be important to coordinate operations with counterparts in Afghanistan.

16. (C) Colonel Kurbanov praised the fruitful bilateral counternarcotics cooperation that had taken place when DEA had a presence in Uzbekistan, and said he hoped that further cooperation would resume in the future. Both he and Inagamov said that they have not only continued to try to interdict drug shipments, but have also gone after the financial assets of narcotraffickers. Inagamov affirmed repeatedly that Minister of Internal Affairs Matlyubov played a prominent role in the Special Investigative Unit (SIU). They expressed interest in retaining the SIU as part of the Ministry, and noted that the SIU is located in a separate unmarked building. Only two senior SIU officials report to MVD Headquarters.

#### Ministry of Internal Affairs Supports DEA's Return

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17. (C) Inagamov said that he hoped the DEA office would reopen at the Embassy so counternarcotics cooperation could resume. This is not just the MVD's opinion, he continued, but that of other agencies in the Government of Uzbekistan, including the National Security Service (NSS). (Comment: Given the very powerful role and apparent veto power the NSS has on most issues of significance in the U.S.-Uzbekistan bilateral relationship, this may be the most significant statement of the day's discussions. End comment.) The NSS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are aware of what the SIU has accomplished, he said. Hackett and DCM raised the past problems regarding non-issuance of visas to DEA staff. DCM emphasized if DEA were to return to Tashkent, its permanent staff would have to be treated like other American staff and issued two-year, multiple-entry visas in accordance with our

agreement with MFA, and any DEA TDY staff should be issued one-year, multiple-entry visas. Inagamov believed that if the Embassy speaks with the MFA about visas and accreditation, DEA staff would receive these like other Embassy diplomats. He said that while the MVD did not have sole responsibility for the decision, the MVD would support a U.S. proposal for the return of DEA to Tashkent. Inagamov also assured the U.S. side that Kamol Dusmetov of the State Commission for Drug Control as well as the National Security Service would be similarly supportive of DEA's return. He then said that MVD would meet with DEA's Regional Director, and when both sides resume cooperation, the MVD will prepare a list of equipment requests for the U.S.

#### State Commission for Drug Control Also Supportive

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18. (C) Later that afternoon, the U.S. side met with Kamol Dusmetov, Deputy Chairman of the State Commission for Drug Control (which the Prime Minister chairs) and Director of the National Center for Drug Control. Dusmetov also spoke favorably of past Uzbekistan-United States cooperation in counternarcotics. He reviewed a list of non-DEA

USG-sponsored counternarcotics project to illustrate, even in DEA's absence, that there has been some limited cooperation in this area outside of law enforcement. He lamented the growth in narcotics production in Afghanistan, and said that everyone knows that revenue from narcotrafficking is a key financial base for terrorist activities. Dusmetov voiced his support for the resumption of DEA activities in Uzbekistan.

#### A Broader Role for the SIU?

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19. (C) Dusmetov said that because the SIU is an extremely powerful unit with communications, financial, and transportation capabilities that greatly exceed those of other units in the Government of Uzbekistan, it should have a broader role than the one that was originally envisioned. He recommended that the SIU work closely with other related agencies in Uzbekistan, such as Customs and the Border Guards, and interact with counterpart institutions in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Russia. While the SIU had worked efficiently in the past, it was too focused on seizures, he said. He said that there should be better mechanisms for inter-ministry cooperation on counternarcotics. Dusmetov hoped that the reopening of a DEA office in Tashkent would help Uzbekistan to formulate a legal basis to work more closely with Afghan colleagues. He admitted that Uzbekistan has experienced difficulties in working with Tajikistan and Afghanistan, but hoped DEA could help Uzbekistan to improve its cooperation with these countries.

#### Interest in Broadening Counternarcotics Efforts

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10. (C) Dusmetov then provided the U.S. side with a packet of documents that provided details on recent drug seizures in Uzbekistan, with locations, amounts of drugs, ethnicities of those detained, and dates listed. He complained that unfortunately, some of the seizures had been accidental. "Imagine!" he exclaimed. "A half ton of heroin can transit through Uzbekistan, and no one checks it. These trucks crossed our borders, and Customs, the Border Guards, and the MVD did not react." Dusmetov continued that what the GOU has seized so far is only the tip of the iceberg. While Uzbekistan has been able to catch some of the low-level couriers, it still needs to find the high-level drug trafficking organizers. Dusmetov hoped that greater cooperation with DEA could further this end. He said that Uzbekistan has good counternarcotics cooperation with Great Britain and Germany, and that it also talks to Italy, Turkey, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. "We hope to work with you too," Dusmetov said. "We have nothing to hide." (Comment: Dusmetov, who has been to DEA's academy in the U.S. and worked with several cohorts of DEA and Embassy diplomats

during his nine years in this position, clearly has missed the contact and expertise that we bring to the fight. Listening to him describe his committee's interagency coordination and its occasional lapses suggests the NSS or other major GOU counternarcotics players may not always be informing the State Commission for Drug Control of their plans and activities. End comment.)

Comment:

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¶11. (C) President Karimov himself may be behind the sudden renewal of GOU interest in counternarcotics cooperation with the U.S.--this was an important theme in the remarks he delivered to heads of state at the NATO/EAPC summit in Bucharest on April 3. We were impressed with the professionalism and openness of the law enforcement officials we met, and their strong desire to revitalize ties with the U.S. DEA is an encouraging sign. Counternarcotics is an area that has attracted the attention of the upper echelons of the Government of Uzbekistan, and growing concerns about the regional narcotics situation, the possibility of DEA resuming assistance for a GOU-underfunded SIU, as well as a more general desire to improve bilateral ties may be additional drivers behind the GOU's desire to reestablish active cooperation with DEA. Post encourages DEA's Regional Director to visit Tashkent in May to present a specific plan to Government of Uzbekistan authorities on how to bring DEA back and intensify counternarcotics cooperation. Post will work closely with DEA to get the modalities of working with the GOU right regarding DEA's possible return to Tashkent.

¶12. (U) DEA Dushanbe Acting Country Attache Paul Hackett has cleared this cable.  
NORLAND